



Fourth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS (HANSARD)

42 Elizabeth II

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 30, 1993

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Karen Richard, Brenda Ferland, Ken Genaille and others, requesting the Family Services minister (Mr. Gilleshamer) consider restoring funding to friendship centres in Manitoba.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Cheryl Sinclair, Stacey Berry, Donna Krut and others, requesting the Family Services minister (Mr. Gilleshamer) consider restoring funding for friendship centres in Manitoba.

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Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Glenn Hosea, Phyllis Tolmsa, Grace McConkey and others, requesting the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshamer) to consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 1,000 young adults are currently attempting to get off welfare and upgrade their education through the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS Winnipeg already has the highest number of people on welfare in decades; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has already changed social assistance rules resulting in

increased welfare costs for the City of Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is now proposing to eliminate the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS eliminating the Student Social Allowances Program will result in more than a thousand young people being forced onto city welfare with no means of getting further full-time education, resulting in more long-term costs for city taxpayers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshamer) to consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Santos). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the theme, "Indigenous People: a new partnership"; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has totally discontinued funding to all friendship centres; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated that these cuts mirror the federal cuts; and

WHEREAS the elimination of all funding to friendship centres will result in the loss of many jobs as well as the services and programs provided, such as: assistance to the elderly, the homeless, youth programming, the socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, advocacy;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Family Services minister to

consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this morning from the Van Walleghem Elementary School seventy Grade 5 students under the direction of Kim Peppler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this morning.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Manitoba Telephone System Unitel Hookup Costs

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the Wall Street Journal, there is an ad for AT&T which is now buying into Manitoba business through their purchase of 20 percent shares in Unitel. There is an ad talking about how the border will no longer be a barrier for AT&T to buy shares. In fact, they have the border there reminiscent of the free trade debate in 1988, with the talk of the Americanization of the telecommunications system.

I would like to ask the Premier, in light of his government's policies and the federal Conservative policies on Americanizing the telephone system in Manitoba: What will be the impact on the bottom line of the Manitoba Telephone System of discounters taking business and long-distance business away from MTS, and the hookup costs for Unitel, the hookup costs that we will pay to Unitel to hook up to our telephone lines? What will be the cost on the bottom line to the Manitoba Telephone System?

* (1005)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Telephone System has obviously been dealing with the issue of deregulation and of ensuring that there is competition in the telephone systems of our country, so that we can avoid the prospect that will occur if we do not ensure that we are competitive in this province, which is that jobs will go south with the telecommunications industry or jobs will go elsewhere.

We had, for instance, an issue that was raised in this Legislature and in the media about I believe it was the Liver Foundation which was doing fundraising out of Winnipeg. In examining the issue as to why they would consider moving their operations outside of this province, it was because they could get telco rates less expensively in Edmonton, where they could have a wholesaler purchase the long distance trunk capacity and then resell it to individuals at a lesser rate. By utilizing all of the aspects of the trunk connection on a 24-hour basis, they could give lesser rates to smaller users such as this particular organization. The net effect would be the loss of some 59 jobs to Winnipeg.

So if we do not ensure that we are competitive, if we do not ensure that we are involved with the transition that is taking place in terms of telecommunications competition throughout North America, we will lose far more jobs in Manitoba in all of these related industries that have telephones and telecommunications as a basic part of their operation.

So it is not as simple as the member opposite in his empty sloganizing would like to portray. It is a real matter of understanding what it is going to take to build this economy and what it is going to take to ensure that the telecommunications costs are competitive here because telecommunications is one of the prime fields in which we can add jobs if we continue to be competitive, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, excuse us for being a little concerned about the discrepancy between the Premier's answer in this Chamber and the Minister of Education's (Mrs. Vodrey) decisions at our community colleges to cut sections dealing with telecommunications, but we have always known that the Tory economic strategy does not include education and training. There is no co-ordination between the right hand and the other right hand of government.

Mr. Speaker, we had been involved in establishing competition at the Cellular telephone line. We had set up a system where the two retailers competed together, but they came onto the Manitoba Telephone System line, and therefore the public that had paid for those lines got the benefit of the competition and the revenue because the public had paid for those lines.

My question to the Premier is: How can he support a policy where Manitobans are going to pay

70 percent of the hookup costs for Unitel which is now 20 percent American-owned? How can he support a policy which is not even just competition—it is us paying a private company to come in and take away business from our consumers?

* (1010)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, the track record of the New Democrats in entering into business arrangements with the Telephone System leaves a lot to be desired—\$27 million lost in the sands of Saudi Arabia because those smart people over there thought they could compete with the AT&Ts and the Bell Northerns of this world—absolute ignorance in which they went and squandered Manitoba ratepayers' money on the sands of Saudi Arabia.

He speaks of the arrangements that they had made to get into the cellular communications field without telling us that Manitobans have lost money in their efforts in cellular phones since the time that his government got into it, that Manitoba Telephone System's Cellular has not only not made a nickel but has lost millions of dollars by virtue of their entry into that field.

Mr. Speaker, what he does not tell is that Unitel has to pay 50 cents out of every dollar of revenue that they get from their operations to the Manitoba Telephone System for the privilege of using the Manitoba Telephone System infrastructure that he talks about. No other arrangement ever was given to any supplier in this country on any basis where the first 50 cents out of every dollar of revenue has to go to the Manitoba Telephone System to pay for that infrastructure.

Those are all things that were taken into account by the CRTC when they made these arrangements, when they analyzed them, when they understood the ramifications, not like the kind of empty sloganeering we are getting from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not answer the question about what will be the impact on the bottom line of us paying 70 percent of the hookup cost.

Telecommunications Industry Employment Creation Strategy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to ask the Premier a final question. His own trend strategy dealing with Education and

Training includes a reduction of people in telecommunications.

We see a reduction in the number of people working at the northern Telecom plant. Every month or so, unfortunately, we see a couple more layoffs, 20, 19, 45, Mr. Speaker. We see Unitel creating 400 jobs in Manitoba, announced, reannounced and announced again by the government, and that is one consolation, but we also see the Manitoba Telephone System plan filed by the Public Utilities Board indicating a reduction of 1,000 employees in Manitoba Telephone System.

Mr. Speaker, what numbers should we believe in terms of job creation are correct, the numbers coming out of the Department of Education which show a reduction in employees and opportunities in telecommunications in Manitoba, or what number has the Premier got for net benefit to Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member is confusing a whole series of things that are happening.

The Manitoba Telephone System, in order to keep its own operations efficient and because of changing technologies that allow things to be done with fewer people, Manitoba Telephone System was going to have to move with the times. It was happening in the '80s.

In fact, I have a paper that says that the reason why the NDP government went into the Saudi Arabian operation was to avoid the layoffs of several hundred people in the Manitoba Telephone System, and the then-chairman, Saul Miller, wrote to the minister responsible, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), and said, we can avoid these layoffs by creating opportunities in a business in Saudi Arabia, a business in Saudi Arabia that lost \$27 million for the people of Manitoba in order to try and avoid 200 or 300 layoffs at Manitoba Telephone System as they moved with the times, Mr. Speaker. They did not want to move with the times. They had their own bright ideas that have cost Manitobans dearly.

The fact is, Manitoba Telephone System will move with the times, but in addition to that, because we are competitive, because we are doing the things that are necessary in order to be in the modern world in telecommunications, we are having a setup here by Unitel with over 400 jobs. We are having a telephone service centre here from Canada Post

with over 100 jobs. We are having Canadian Pacific with over 200 jobs in telecommunications.

All of those things are coming in here and more will follow, Mr. Speaker. None of those firms are concerned with an availability of trained staff. They know that our colleges and universities will produce the trained staff they need. They have every confidence in it, and we have every confidence in it.

Poverty Rate Government Reduction Strategy

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba, for the last several years under this Conservative government, has had the dubious distinction of having the highest rate of child poverty anywhere in this country. We now have the more recent statistics bringing us up to 1991. Manitoba now has the highest rate of poverty for all persons among all provinces anywhere in this country. Our poverty rate for all persons in one year has increased from 17.1 percent to 21.1 percent. That is more than one in five persons in Manitoba falling below the poverty line.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) if he is now finally prepared to recognize the serious nature of this problem and tell us what plan of action he has for attacking poverty in this province.

* (1015)

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, we have had a discussion of this during the Estimates process with the other critics from the New Democratic Party where we have looked at the rates, and Manitoba has rates that are in line with other provinces.

We have looked at the manner in which Statistics Canada gathers their statistics and bases that particular poverty line on the cost of living in cities like Vancouver and Toronto. We have looked at all of the enhancements that Manitoba has brought into the system of social allowances and, in fact, in Manitoba, we have the third lowest incidence of people who are accessing the social allowance system.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, all statistics show that there has been a marked increase in poverty in Manitoba, making this province a national disgrace. Our poverty went in one year from 183,000 to 218,000 Manitobans.

I want to ask this government if it is now prepared to take steps to reduce poverty in this province, or

is it prepared to play the game of the federal government by trying to make the problem go away by redefining the definition of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question.

Mr. Gilleshamer: Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things we do is review those rates on an annual basis, and we have had the opportunity to raise those rates according to the cost of living, but at the same time have brought in a number of other reforms that we have had the opportunity in the last few days to talk about with the critic from the New Democratic Party, about the number of enhancements we have made to the system.

Again, we have also had a good discussion of how those statistics are generated and that those statistics reflect the cost of living in cities like Toronto and Vancouver and have to be looked at with a critical eye as far as their application to Manitoba.

Student Social Allowances Program Reinstatement

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, this government is playing a numbers game while people in this province—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I remind the honourable member this is not a time for debate.

The honourable member for St. Johns, with her question, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Will this government, at least as a very minimum, Mr. Speaker, reconsider some of its devastating budgetary decisions like the elimination of the Student Social Allowances Program which will only add to poverty in this province and perpetuate the cycle of poverty? Will it at least reinstate—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question.

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to come to the Estimates process where we have had a chance to talk about raising the liquid asset rates, creating new programs for the disabled, to letting certain people who are accessing social allowance keep their health card as they move to employment.

All of these enhancements are over and above the increase in the rates that we have annually increased to reflect the cost of living in Manitoba.

Manitoba Telephone System Mandate

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

The Premier talks about MTS having to compete in a global economy and having to move with the times. The problem is that the companies that the Premier is asking MTS to compete with have a fundamentally different mandate. The mandate of AT&T and Unitel is to make a profit. The mandate of MTS is not only to be fiscally responsible, but to serve remote areas in this province and rural Manitobans with affordable telephone services, something that AT&T and Unitel do not have as part of their mandate.

My question for the Premier: How does he expect MTS with its mandate, which is a social mandate for this province and in particular for rural and northern Manitobans, to compete with international companies whose only mandate is profit?

* (1020)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether or not the member opposite is being consistent in the position that he is taking on issues. As a candidate for the leadership of the Liberal Party, he is quoted in an article recently that says—I think you will be interested in this. You may be able to use this on the stump, as well.

He was being questioned at a public meeting that he held recently with respect to his leadership by a former member of this House, Lem Shuttleworth, who said and I quote: Shuttleworth suggested that if elected leader, Edwards could possibly win a provincial election if he leaned more to the left, to which Edwards replied, quote, I do not intend to sell my soul even to win an election.

Now, having reconsidered that position, the member asks the question that implies that because it is publicly owned, the Manitoba Telephone System should be inefficient and uncompetitive in order to serve the people of Manitoba, simply an instrument of social policy within the province, which is absolute nonsense.

If we allowed that to happen, of course, all of us would pay higher rates. All of us would simply do what the New Democrats did and that is create jobs in Saudi Arabia so that they could justify their actions in trying to keep 200 or 300 more people employed

at the Manitoba Telephone System. It is absolute total nonsense, and it shows how confused the Liberal Party is in this province.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for reading some of my better quotes in the House. As he has once said, I do not have time to read my quotes, but I am glad he does.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier says it is publicly owned and that is correct. That means it has a public mandate. It is not privately owned. Its only mandate is not to shareholders in New York and Washington. Its mandate is to the people of this province.

My question for the Premier: What effect is having Unitel and AT&T in this economy forcing MTS to compete in a global marketplace—what effect is that going to have on their public mandate to offer affordable telephone services, in particular, to people in remote, northern and rural areas of this province, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, by being competitive and offering competitive rates, what will happen to the Manitoba Telephone System is that all of these other organizations, such as Unitel, such as others who are coming in here as potential resellers of long-distance capacity, trunk capacity, will bring in businesses which will use greater volumes of long-distance service in Manitoba.

In fact, when you bring in a telephone service centre such as Unitel has, such as Canadian Pacific, such as Canada Post, such as others are going to set up here, you will have tremendous volumes of long distance being utilized in this province which are not presently here, which will add to the total volume of usage of the Manitoba Telephone System, which will help to keep the overall rates down.

So the additional volume not only produces jobs in Manitoba in telecommunications, but produces the revenue necessary to keep the rates down. That is something, Mr. Speaker, that the member obviously does not understand with respect to the Telephone System's operations.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, this is this pie in the sky, it is all coming up roses tomorrow, do not worry, we will be okay. The fact is, MTS relies on those long-distance rates to pay for affordable telephones around this province.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier: How many years or decades down the road does he expect his prediction to come true, that we are actually going to be able to pay for all the telephone services to people outside the city of Winnipeg by having AT&T and Unitel come and employ thousands of people to pay for it? How many years—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we continue to be able to pay for all of the northern and remote users of the Telephone System at low rates.

If you listen to the people from the Manitoba Telephone System, they expect that they will continue to make profits while keeping the rates low and reasonable for Manitobans, and, if you look at the doom and gloom that was predicted by New Democrats and Liberals when, as a result of a CRTC decision our long-distance rates were reduced, I believe, it was 40 percent overnight, what happened was that the total long-distance revenue of the Telephone System went up 20 percent because of that. Overall it went up 20 percent, despite a 40 percent reduction in rates.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what happens when there is greater volume, greater usage and more competitive rates. It happens and it happens regularly, and I hope that the member opposite will do a little bit of studying on these issues before he comes to the Legislature with these questions in the future.

* (1025)

Poverty Rate Government Reduction Strategy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Family Services would like to redefine the poverty line in order to make himself and his government look better in the eyes of the public.

In the meantime, the standards are defined by the National Council of Welfare in their most recent Winter 1993 Report of Poverty Profile Updates from 1991. So we know that 17.1 percent of all families in Manitoba are poor, the worst rate in Canada, that 21.1 percent of all persons in Manitoba are poor, the worst rate in Canada and 26.9 percent of all children in Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member, with your question, please.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Family Services is: What decisions has he made and what decisions has his government made in their most recent budget that puts more money into the pockets of poor Manitobans?

We do not want to hear about the benefits in terms of liquid asset exemptions, which we have already heard about, but what is giving people more money in order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to his colleague in an earlier question, we annually look at the rates and increase them at the level of the cost of living.

We do that at a point in time when government revenue is very low relative to what it was in the '70s and '80s, back when that member's fellow travellers were in government, when government revenue was increasing in double-digit numbers. They simply did not increase the rates at that time. At the present time now, they are asking us to increase the rates above the level of the cost of living.

Social Assistance Rate Adjustments

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): The minister talks about the rate increases on January 1.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if he will acknowledge that provincial social assistance recipients in their cheques this week are receiving less money and if the minister could explain why they are getting less money in their cheques this week.

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that we have annually increased the rates on January 1. The Province of Ontario froze the rates on January 1 and refused to raise them this past budget year.

There are some adjustments in the cheques this week because of the decisions made regarding the tax credits.

Poverty Rate Government Reduction Strategy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): The minister is unwilling to admit that they have reduced the supplementary benefit and that is why people are getting less money.

I would like to ask the minister what—

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the minister in his response clearly said it was a result of the budgetary moves dealing with an equivalent to the property tax credit, which everybody would know is direct reference to the supplementary credit.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader does not have a point of order. There is no point of order.

The honourable member for Burrows, with your question, please.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services what he or his government is going to do to ensure that poor people in Manitoba are better off as a result of their policies and not worse off, which we now know is the case. The poverty rate in Manitoba is going to rise because of the policies of this government.

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate, because obviously the member did not hear it. I said clearly, those differences in the cheques were a result of the changes made to the tax credits, which in effect is the supplementary benefit which he congratulated the government on last year when we took that step. We will continue to address the rates on an annual basis.

Again, I point out to the member that we have the third lowest incidence of citizens on social allowance, and our rates are comparable to those of other provinces.

Emergency Room Physicians Contingency Plans

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, we are going into the weekend with a good deal of uncertainty respecting the emergency ward situation at the community hospitals. I would like the minister to have the opportunity to clarify the situation going into the weekend.

I would like to ask the minister, can he assure the House that if the strike is not settled today—and I understand there is a meeting this afternoon—that both St. Boniface Hospital and Health Sciences Centre can handle the obvious increased level of activity at the emergency wards this weekend?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to my honourable friend that the meeting this afternoon at two o'clock is with the ministry and the respective facilities, urban hospitals and the two teaching hospitals which are trying to manage emergency care during this strike period.

Mr. Speaker, reports overnight have indicated, yes, an increase in activity, but that the system is still able to manage. This afternoon at two o'clock, we hope to be able to further assure that the system, should the strike continue over the weekend, would be able to cope with emergency services.

If I have any further communication as a result of that meeting this afternoon at two o'clock, I will make same available to the public at large.

* (1030)

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to that: Can the minister advise this House that contingency beds will be available at Health Sciences and St. Boniface?—because we know that at Health Sciences, for example, in the last three weeks the emergency ward was shut down due to lack of beds at least on one occasion. Can the minister assure the House that contingencies will be available for beds to be made available in that instance?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend might have missed or not remembered the answer I gave, I believe it was on Tuesday or possibly Wednesday.

The process that is in place and the arrangement between the two teaching hospitals which are operating 24 hours, seven-days-a-week emergency services—the arrangement is this with the community hospitals, that should an individual present at either St. Boniface or Health Sciences Centre in an emergency circumstance and be stabilized, the arrangements are made for admission of that individual to the appropriate community hospital which would be the normal geographic area—if that is the way to put it—that this individual would come from.

So the necessity of admission will be accomplished already with an arrangement that has been in place since Tuesday of this week with the urban hospitals and the two teaching hospitals.

Negotiations

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, this is my final supplementary to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, I can take it from the minister's response that negotiations are not ongoing with the doctors. Can the minister please advise this House as to what the status is of negotiations with respect to the doctors in an effort to resolve this dispute?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the two sides will meet to recommence negotiations Monday. We are hopeful that there will be an opportunity to resolve the issue very expeditiously after that, providing we can agree to a settlement, Sir.

Health Prevention Children's Dental Health Program

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, one of the keystones of this minister's and this government's health reform package was to prevent illness and not have the expense of dealing with illness prematurely. This minister and this government cut the Children's Dental Health Program in rural Manitoba. It did not affect the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg. It affected rural and northern Manitoba.

My question for the Minister of Health is: What could be more in the interest of prevention, Mr. Speaker, than a program which sought to prevent dental problems in children around this province? What could have been more in the interest of prevention?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome my honourable friend's question, because possibly he might listen very attentively so that he can better understand the role of education and prevention.

My honourable friend, if I detected from his preamble, said that a cornerstone of health reform is prevention and education to prevent disease. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have maintained in the Children's Dental Health Program, the education of children and the prevention of dental disease.

Mr. Speaker, the treatment portion, yes, has been removed from the program as of June 30. I want my honourable friend to understand that the part he so desires will remain intact as a prevention-education component of children's health in Manitoba.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the distinction between prevention and treatment is a false one. The minister seeks to derive that distinction.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is: Those principles, prevention and education, were the principles before the cuts. How does he intend to do the job when there are only five out of 49 staff people left doing the same work for 60,000 children in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend might well be aware that part of prevention in the school system is fluoride rinse. That is a very significant component and that will be maintained.

My honourable friend might also know—and he might visit communities in his newfound interest outside of the city of Winnipeg—that while this government has been elected, a number of those communities outside of Winnipeg now have fluoridated water, also a preventative effort in building better teeth for Manitobans outside the city of Winnipeg, an initiative funded by this government, advanced by this government, supported by this government, all on the prevention side to give Manitobans better teeth.

Children's Dental Health Program Meeting Request

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): My final question is for the Minister of Health, and I am hoping that he will have a newfound interest in rural Manitoba and in the issues affecting those people.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister: I assume, and I would like him to confirm, that he will be attending the meeting which is organized for the evening of May 11 in Minnedosa to discuss this very issue, to discuss the child dental health care program. Will the minister be attending—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James has put his question.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of an invitation to that meeting, but I know my honourable friend will want to be in Minnedosa so he can tell the folks of Minnedosa that under his leadership, the Liberal Party would not close the hospital in Minnedosa and not build hospitals in rural Manitoba, as has been the Liberal policy under the current leadership.

Central Child and Family Services Statistics

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, we have had confirmed that even though there is an increase in child poverty, even though there is an increase in violence among young people and numbers of children living on the streets, that the Streets Kids and Youth program will be closing. This program received most of its funding through the Core Area Initiative, but now the more than 6,000 kids who were serviced through that organization will have to look elsewhere for food, shelter and some safety.

My question is for the Minister of Family Services. Of the approximately 1,700 young people under the care of the Central Child and Family Services as wards of the state, how many of those children are not accounted for in group homes or foster homes?

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the member is asking for some statistical information that I do not have with me today, but I would invite her to attend the Estimates process along with her colleagues. A number of them have been there. We are just about to launch into that area of the department.

I would say that I met with a group of people from the Downtown BIZ organization yesterday to discuss the SKY program. The representatives of the business community that are involved in the SKY program presented information on their funding and the problems they are having with their funding for the coming year, and those matters will continue to be discussed.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that this government does not want to know the serious statistics of children in need in this province.

Education System Enrollment Statistics

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): My second question is for the Minister of Education.

Can the minister tell us what was the number of young people enrolled in school in Manitoba in 1991 in September?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again, some of the details around school enrollment I will be happy to discuss during the Estimates process.

As the member may know, the time in which enrollments are taken is in the fall, and I am happy to give her that information. She may also know that there has also been some discussion around when enrollments should be taken in schools so that we have the most accurate count of young people who are attending school.

* (1040)

Student Completion Statistics

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I would also appreciate that the minister would bring me the number of students or young people who completed school in Manitoba in June of 1992. How many of the students completed their year in 1992?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I believe the member asked if I would provide that information during the Estimates process, and, yes, I will see that this information is available, because in Manitoba we do look at those numbers of students who have completed the Grade 12 year and have successfully completed the high school diploma.

Manitoba Mineral Resources Reserves

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago, I asked the Minister of Energy and Mines whether in fact he had done any consultation with the mining industry or the mining partners of Manitoba Mineral Resources before he raided the kitty of some \$16 million to make the Minister of Finance (Mr. Mansess) look good by reducing his deficit. The minister in his response said that he had consulted with the chair of the board.

My question to the Minister of Energy and Mines is: Can he share with this House or with myself any objective analysis of the potential impact of withdrawing that \$16 million on the obligations of MMR to share in capital improvement projects should that be required within the next six to 12 months?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, that indicates the priority which that opposition party and that member places on the mineral sector in this province. I think it was almost a week ago that he asked his first question and did not get an opportunity to ask two supplementaries until today. So it is not a very high priority on the agenda of the members opposite. [interjection]

I answered the question, Mr. Speaker, for the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), and the answer is that the monies were taken from MMR after consultation was carried out with the chairman of MMR. To my knowledge at this particular time, it will not impair the operations of MMR.

Trout Lake Mine Capital Funding

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, the people of Flin Flon and the people who rely on HBM&S, which was a joint-venture partner with MMR, are not going to be satisfied with the minister's consultations with his political appointee.

My question is: Can the minister assure the people of Flin Flon and HBM&S that should additional investment be required in Trout Lake Mine, which is partnered with MMR, this government will provide the capital necessary to complete that venture to ensure jobs in the community of Flin Flon?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the people of Flin Flon and that area of the province that this government had a commitment of \$55 million to upgrade a smelter that he could not get his colleagues to support, which created employment, which improved the environmental emissions that were coming out of that plant.

It was this government that did the \$55-million input, not his operation.

Manitoba Mineral Resources Reserves

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): The Minister of Energy and Mines keeps referring to a deal that they bungled. It took three years too long—

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, my question is a serious question. Will the minister please indicate now whether Manitoba Mineral Resources will have the capital available to them to complete necessary joint-venture projects in Flin Flon, Leaf Rapids and Snow Lake, should it become necessary within the next six to 12 months?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, my answer is a very serious one to the member for Flin Flon.

This government's commitment to the mining industry in Manitoba far outstretches, outreaches,

anything that government, when he was in government, did.

As far as the operations of MMR, Mr. Speaker, at this time, it is my understanding that the changes that have taken place with the capital fund that was in MMR have not impaired or changed the operations of MMR for this year.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Dauphin has time for one very short question.

National Mathematics Assessment Test Manitoba Objectives

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education. There is a national mathematics assessment test that is being administered across this country, and this province is participating for 13- and 16-year-olds.

I want to ask the minister what the objectives and goals are of Manitoba's participation in that math test that Manitoba is participating in.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows and most Manitobans know, a number of Manitoba students who are 13 and 16 years old are taking part in a Student Achievement Indicators Project, which was developed through the Council of Ministers of Education.

Each province had the opportunity to review the exam. We are now looking to see how Manitobans in general will deal with, and will achieve on, this test. We will be able to look at Manitoba in relation to the other provinces across Canada in terms of our math achievement and curriculum.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to obtain unanimous consent of the House to withdraw Bill 9, The Winter Roads (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, currently listed on the Order Paper for second reading, as the government is not proceeding with it.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable government House leader has asked leave to remove Bill 9, The Winter Roads (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act (Loi sur les routes d'hiver—modifications de diverses dispositions législatives). Is there leave? [agreed]

I would like to thank all honourable members for that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Mansness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you call adjourned debate, second reading, Bills 8, 16 and 23 in that order.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

BILL 8-The Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 8, The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances, standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 8. I know that Bill 8 has been before the House now for some time, but it has taken us some time to review the bill and come to the conclusion that, in fact, this is not a major bill we are dealing with here. There are some minor changes. Having said that, I do want to review some of those and make some comments on the contents of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, this particular bill is intended to do several things, one of which is to reduce time delays in the binding of crop insurance. I understand from the minister that under the current system it is possible for a number of—up to a four-day, I believe, delay in the binding of crop insurance policies. This particular bill, because of the advent I must say of fax machines, will allow the crop insurance to be bound with only one-day delay. This is a significant improvement for service to the farm community.

Mr. Speaker, there are several other points that this bill addresses. A second point is that a procedure known as countersigning will now be eliminated, so the requirement that agents countersign all the policies will no longer be there. This comes about because, increasingly, insurers are sending the policies direct to the insured, and it seems reasonable that they should be allowed to sign them directly within the company.

Another area that the bill deals with is harmonization with the federal scene. We have seen changes, certainly with the advent of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, but just worldwide there has been a move towards

harmonization, particularly with global companies and so on.

They desire and work towards having uniformity. It is understandable that they would want that because it lowers, to a certain extent, their administration costs. They would want a harmonization from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and particularly in a country like Canada we see ourselves in a situation where we have a Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and we are on the verge of a Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement.

In fact, we do not even have free trade in our own country. We have barriers between the provinces which many people have shaken their heads about over the years. I know the provinces have tried to come to grips with it at various times and with only certain degrees of success up to this point.

In this regard, in the insurance industry, there has been a move for some sort of harmonization at the federal level and consistency of the application of the laws and the laws themselves. In fact, the federal insurance companies are now no longer required to file deposits directly with the federal government, and the changes in this act would allow for consistency there.

* (1050)

The reference is also made to industry-funded compensation plans, and those in fact were set up during our previous term, the NDP one, in government when Al Mackling was the minister.

In fact, the provinces, the provincial ministers across the country got together, and they set up a compensation fund for both the property and casualty insurance companies but also the life insurance companies if there was to be a bankruptcy. By the way, there had not been in the life insurance business in 100 years—I think it is only recently that there has been one—and in the property casualty field there had not been problems with bankruptcies until perhaps the last 10 years.

Nevertheless, this compensation plan was put into place around 1987 thereabouts, and just in time, I might add, because it is in fact being used now in a couple of property casualty failures, and it has been used I believe just recently in the Sovereign Life failure in Alberta from a life point of view.

Essentially what those compensation funds do is that they allow the policyholders not to lose out in the event of the bankruptcy of their company. In the

case of Sovereign, anybody who has a Sovereign Life policy and dies, their beneficiaries, without the compensation plans, would be just plain out of luck. The compensation plan does allow that the beneficiaries will get a certain amount of the payout of the policy.

Also, with the property and casualty compensation plan, there are certainly limitations on what the payouts will be, but certainly they are generous enough that a person would not be out should their property insurer go bankrupt and not be able to pay the claims. They would at least be able to get minimums in coverage and not be left out in the cold.

Mr. Speaker, there is some reference here to plain language being introduced into this act, and it is about time. I recall a former member of the House here, the former member for Kildonan, Marty Dolin, speaking quite a bit back in 1986-87 about the need for plain language policies. In fact, Marty used to enjoy making speeches in this House and say that, in addition to translating the bills and the laws into French, we should translate them into English, because he never felt that the common person could understand the legislation in this House. He felt that laws should be put into English and the people could more clearly understand them.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Well, more moves have been made in that direction over the years, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we still have a long way to go. Now I know lawyers will tell you that, in fact, plain language policies can present problems, some sort of legal problems, because legal language has been developed in a certain way for reasons over the years—and good reasons. Lawyers will argue that the laws as drafted, the acts as drafted, are drafted the way they should be, and by turning them around into plain language, you can perhaps understand it a little better, but perhaps lose out in terms of your legal rights.

Now, having said that, I note that Royal Insurance of Canada was, I believe, the first insurance company—at least they claim to be the first insurance company—to develop a plain language policy, and that has been followed over the last half a dozen years or so by several others. Initially, it was viewed with a lot of interest, and people thought it was the way to go, and I think it is, too.

But I will say that, having had some experience in this field over the years, whether it is in plain English or not so plain English or French or Greek, it makes no difference. The fact of the matter is that if people have a problem, they rely on the experts to interpret the wording for them anyway. So no one really sits down and reads all these contracts and attempts to figure them out; at least not very many people do it. Maybe the odd person does it, but not too many people do.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wanted to make further comments on this bill because the bill also deals with the question of the co-insurance clause which is a requirement, always has been a requirement, actually a disclosure requirement of insurance policies. It essentially says that the co-insurance clause has to be in red ink up one side of the policy or at the bottom, and the red ink is there because they want it to be a different colour than the body and text of the policy, and that is to draw the person's attention to this clause, supposedly, so that they will be able to explain it properly to the consumer.

I think that it is questionable. I believe that a lot of the insurance personnel do not understand the co-insurance clause to start with, so how they are supposed to explain it to the public is beyond me. Nevertheless, it is a necessary flag, and because of the changes in technology over the last few years and with the advent of laser printers and the like, I understand the industry is interested in changing this requirement so that rather than spending a lot of money in printing paper through a printer and then taking the paper and printing it on typewriters in the insurance companies, they will now be able just simply with a laser printer to print the policy and the policy-specific information right on the paper without having to pay for the costs of printing two-colour productions. The proviso in this bill allows for 12-point bold type as the alternative to red ink. So this is another housekeeping requirement of the bill and more than likely something whose time has come as far as the industry is concerned.

The minister in her speech refers to going forth boldly, I believe, in this area. She makes this point, but the point is that it is there for a full disclosure, even though no one that I know has ever read it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I certainly did not want to let this opportunity pass at this point on this bill, without dealing with a topical area right now, and that is the area of the no-fault insurance, because I

have watched with some interest over the last months and, in fact, few years as this issue has been dealt with in other jurisdictions.

I might say at the outset that this should not really be viewed as a partisan, political argument. I can show you examples of jurisdictions where in Quebec in what, I believe, was 1978 or 1980, whenever the current Quebec insurance plan was brought in, it was brought in by a left-leaning government of Rene Levesque. But I can also point out to you that the no-fault accident and sickness program in New Zealand in 1973 was brought in by a Conservative government.

In New Zealand, with successive governments, as the government changed hands back and forth over the years from Conservative government to Labour government back to Conservative government and back to Labour government again, all that has really happened with that system in New Zealand is that, like Workers Compensation, there is a general tightening up of benefits paid and restrictions when the Conservatives are in government, and conversely, a loosening of benefits and loosening of restrictions when the Labour government is in power.

So, in reading information about the New Zealand accident-sickness program, one finds that when the Labour government is in, there are looser restrictions and bungee jumpers are covered more liberally by the accident corporation. Then the Conservatives come in power, and they restrict bungee jumpers or perhaps eliminate them, shorten their rope. They shorten the rope, Madam Deputy Speaker, of the bungee jumpers and rein them in a bit.

But essentially it has been viewed as a very positive program and a way to go. The principle behind it is that, if one has an accident or one has a sickness, one should be able to collect from the corporation without having to go to court to prove fault. Actually who cares whose fault it is? You are sick or you have an accident; you should be able to collect.

* (1100)

The premiums that pay for this system are premiums that are levied on, I believe, the employers. I believe general revenue pays a portion of it. Nevertheless, it is funded in such a way as to eliminate the question of tort, eliminate the

litigation and the legal community from involvement in this area.

Jurisdictions have found over the years throughout the world that the legal system, when you are involved in the tort system, tends to prolong the payout of the settlements. It also tends to vastly increase the cost of the system. At some point society finds itself overburdened and unable to continue with a tort system, and a collective decision is made to change to a no-fault system.

I think that we are quickly approaching, Madam Deputy Speaker, that point in Manitoba. I think that regardless of what government was in power in Manitoba, the question of no fault—my friend, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) is here. Even if he were to become the Leader of the Liberal Party and Premier of the province, I think that he would have to come to grips with the whole question of vastly escalating costs of auto insurance in this province. He would have to at least consider the possibility of going to a no-fault system, because the public are unwilling, they are unprepared, and they are unable to continue to pay tremendously increasing costs of soft-tissue claims in this province.

Twenty years ago we found in Manitoba that the cost of repairing the vehicles was the major cost of the insurance program. In fact, the liability claims, the soft-tissue claims were the minority. I think most of us in this House will agree and probably know of people 20 years ago, and I certainly was one of those, who were involved in accidents with vehicles and were happy to come out of them unscathed. We were happy that we did not have to spend an hour in the hospital or a day in the hospital and simply went to Autopac and signed our releases and that was the end of it.

Today, people get into a minor accident, a minor fender bender, and the next thing you know they are onto a lawyer and they have a fight on with the corporation for compensation. The corporation knows, Madam Deputy Speaker, that many of these claims are not that serious. They also know that they need a release from the individual. So they come forward and the lawyers send a couple of letters back and forth, and typically a claim gets settled and Autopac pays out \$5,000 or \$8,000 or \$10,000, and the person really is not hurt at all other than perhaps got shaken up a little bit.

So it takes an awful lot of little premiums to pay for claims like that. For the first time, I believe, this past year, the bodily injury portion is now bigger than the collision part of the insurance premium. Over the years, one could always argue that perhaps it was not the greatest portion of money being paid out, but today it is the largest portion and it is increasing every year, and within about 10 years or so, it is going to be unsustainable in its current form.

It is not a question of if the province will be developing a no-fault system. The question really is when the no-fault system will be brought in. I remember seeing a show, I believe it was on 60 Minutes a few months ago where they were doing a show on lawyers and the tort system in New York, I believe it was, or one of the northeastern states in the United States. They had examples of where an organized ring of people were—whenever there was a subway accident or a transit bus accident in the city, a flood of claims would be made with the transit authorities, so that perhaps there were 60 seats on a bus and 120 people would file an accident claim, claiming to be on the bus. So this system is obviously in bad need of repair.

Now I know that we are going to have a problem with the lawyers in this regard, and to be fair to the lawyers, I do not blame them for defending their turf. I mean, we as politicians spend an enormous amount of time talking to interest groups in our daily existence, and we know there is an interest group for almost anything. If there is a group that wants A, there is another group that wants B, and so it does not matter what you do as a politician, there will be somebody somewhere, some group somewhere, that will come forward and make an argument that you should not do what you are going to do.

If you follow that philosophy, and governments tend to follow that philosophy, nothing gets done, because one group comes in and makes a representation that a certain thing be done, then another group comes in and says, no, if you do that, we are going to go out and oppose you and fight you on this issue; the government decides, well, there is too much opposition here, and it is better just to leave the status quo be and not argue the point.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, that may be what will happen here, but I am aware that the lawyers' lobby—once again, I do not blame them; they want to protect their turf—has been making representations to members of the government, and no doubt that lobby will increase. They have some

legitimate arguments on the other side of the coin for being careful about a no-fault system, and I think we are going to have to weigh those arguments, and we are going to have to collectively in Manitoba make a decision as to whether their arguments are valid or not.

Having said that they have some valid arguments, I would say that the arguments for the no-fault system are equally as valid. In my opinion, they are more valid, and I look forward to a debate in the province on this issue. I think that in the final analysis the sustainability of the current system is just not there, and when the public listens to the debate, when they involve themselves in the debate and they understand what their options are, I do not have any doubts in my own mind that on balance people will opt for a no-fault system in the hopes that their premiums at least will be held to their existing level.

I might point out that in Quebec the liability no-fault system was brought in by René Lévesque, and in fact, it was interesting to listen to a person from Quebec on the radio some time ago when the person came up with the proposition that the rates had either over the years held their own or had actually dropped. I do not know whether that is dropped in real terms or whether they dropped with regard to adjusting the inflation into it. But regardless whether it has dropped in real terms or whether it is inflation terms, it makes no difference. The point is that the program has been in for 15 years now, and when you can show a track record like that in terms of premiums, I think that is unassailable and unbeatable and something that people look forward to favourably.

The other side of the coin is, how are the victims of the accidents treated in Quebec? From what I have been able to see of the situation and understand, reading about the situation and talking to people about the situation, there is no major outcry from people there saying they are not adequately compensated for their injuries.

* (1110)

So what does it tell you? What it tells me there is that the major outflow of money, leakage of money in the system then is the leakage of money to the legal profession and, obviously, they have accommodated in Quebec. I will tell you this, that if you know lawyers, the law is an ever expanding field of opportunity for lawyers and regardless of the fact

that there is an overabundance of lawyers around right now, they always seem to find work for themselves and manage to keep busy.

Every time the Legislature and the federal Parliament passes a law, the City Council passes a law, the laws are drafted by lawyers and the laws are contested by lawyers, and we actually create work for the legal profession here every time we introduce and pass a bill in this House. So I know that lawyers will try to protect their turf. I know they will argue that the tort should remain the way it is but, in actual fact, I think that the legal society will survive a no-fault system.

I want to explain a little bit more about the no-fault system and how it should develop or could develop over the next few years in relation to it being a central accident corporation.

What we have in Manitoba right now and across Canada really is a piecemeal system where, if one has an accident, it really depends on your circumstances as to what you are going to collect and whether you are going to collect or not. If you have an accident and you are covered by Autopac, then you know that you have a certain set of rules with Autopac to follow and you are going to have coverage.

If you are on the job and you happen to have workers compensation, you are going to know you are covered under workmen's compensation. If you are on the job and you do not have workers compensation, then you better hope that there is some sort of a group plan in place. If there is no workers compensation and no group plan, well, then you are really in trouble.

I will tell you that there are two major groups in society that are just uncoverable, that cannot be covered, and those are homemakers and students. If you are a student at the university or if you are a homemaker, there is really no way for you to cover yourself for an accident or a sickness—well, I was going to say on the job, but it is not possible to buy coverage.

So we can see that we have a lot of people slipping through the cracks here. We have the students that cannot be covered by anybody, we have the homemakers that cannot be covered by anybody, we have people that are lucky or unlucky enough to be involved in an auto accident, they have sure coverage with Autopac. If they have workers compensation, they will have coverage there, but a

certain form, if they have a group plan, it will be another form. It is a piecemeal operation and it is not good.

We have private insurance companies selling accident-sickness policies. There are 120 of those companies selling them and there are another 120 versions of the policies. If you are lucky enough to be able to qualify to buy one, given your occupation, and you have an accident, you may be lucky to collect from them too. I am sure there are examples. There are a lot of examples where people are happy with them, but I can tell you there are a lot of other examples too where people find, because the fine print is different in each one of them, that perhaps there may not be coverage for people.

So the argument, Madam Deputy Speaker, for a New Zealand accident-and-sickness type program here is that you eliminate the piecemeal system that you have in this country. You have one central corporation, a no-fault corporation where, regardless of your accident or your sickness, you are able to make a claim to the corporation. There is a payout by the corporation, so there is no need to fight, no need to hire a lawyer to fight through Autopac. There is no need to fight the private insurance company, Workers Compensation. What you do is you roll all those programs into one, so you eliminate the litigation, you eliminate the question of tort in the system.

That is taking the whole argument another step further. The no-fault question of this government is going to come to deal with, I predict—and I predict this government will be introducing a bill on no-fault within the next few weeks. That would be my guess, if they can get by the legal lobby. I would suspect that within a month the no-fault bill will come before the House, and this government will—that is as far as it will look at. It will look at, how do we get by the next election? How do we arrest the costs of auto insurance? Well, no-fault is the answer. Bring it in—wham—get it through. People will be happy with us, and we will get on with life. That will be the end of their thinking on the subject.

All I am saying is that perhaps they should be looking at a little more than just no-fault auto insurance, that there should be a no-fault accident corporation, and that that would involve collapsing a whole lot more than the current system. It would involve collapsing all of those areas that I have talked about into one central system.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the government has had a lot of time to deal with this matter. I have been on several radio shows over the last couple years, and I have been involved with this now for a couple of years, trying to prod and push the government in this direction. We have used quite consistently Judge Kopstein's report of 1988, where Mr. Judge Kopstein came up with a whole plethora of recommendations, and the cornerstone recommendation, the one that Judge Kopstein said would change the system to allow Manitobans to save, I believe it was, \$40 million on car insurance was the one recommendation that this government has avoided.

They have acted on a few minor housekeeping—sort of what this bill is all about. That has been sort of the way this government has operated. They have picked out a few things, little things here and there, and they brought them in—window dressing. They brought them in to suggest that somehow they are making some movement, they are taking some initiative. So when the minister gets on the radio and talks about the Kopstein report, he says, well, you know, there were 140 recommendations, and blah, blah, we brought in 80 of them or whatever it is that he has brought in. But the ones he has brought in are the minor ones. They are not major ones at all.

The cornerstone, the key recommendation, is the no-fault, and what have they done? They simply sat back and allowed increases in the premiums over the last five or six years, done nothing to come to grips with the premium increase, and now they find themselves behind the eight ball having just gone through the biggest increase now in history—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am having great difficulty following the relevance of the remarks of the honourable member for Elmwood to Bill 8, The Insurance Amendment Act. This bill deals with crop insurance and reinsurance, and I do not believe it relates in any way to no-fault auto or liability insurance. I would ask the honourable member to please keep his remarks relevant.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Deputy Speaker, could you tell me how much time I have left, first of all?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member has eight minutes remaining.

Mr. Maloway: I note that future Senator Foghorn over here is making some disparaging comments, but I might tell him that I listened with interest to his

last speech, and he makes some good ones in the House, and the last one was not particularly exciting but I did suffer through it.

With regard to Bill 8, I must, with all due respect, say that the bill has much more to do with just the previous comments that I have made here. I mean, sure it has to do with the time delays in binding crop insurance and that, but there is far more to it than that.

At this point in the reading, I am here to make comments on the bill and on the insurance, and it seems to me that my comments are relevant. I look at the speeches of the previous members, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Evans), and I see a speech here that lasted 40 minutes long and it was totally on the topic of no-fault auto insurance.

So, with respect, I did look at those and I came to the conclusion that if the member for Brandon East should have the latitude to spend 40 minutes on no-fault auto insurance, that I would be granted the same courtesy given that light. But I respect your admonition on this topic, and I do plan to spend my next eight minutes directly on the bill here, if I could just find a copy of it.

* (1120)

Madam Deputy Speaker, there was reference made to harmonization with the federal government. I dealt with that a little bit earlier, but I do want to get back on that area again because it is a major area. I had indicated that with the advent of the free trade deal that there is a major move now because the federal government and the provinces are somewhat embarrassed that they find themselves locked into a continental free trade deal here with the United States, and in fact, having a lot of trade barriers between provinces which have not been rationalized and dealt with over the years.

We find that to be the thorniest issue of all because in fact people can sit back and make a decision based on a big picture, trade with the United States, but yet when it comes down to whether or not they are going to maintain a brewery on Redwood, if we have free trade in the liquor industry and the beer industry then we are going to lose our breweries, people get right upset about that and get really excited about it and we as local politicians are forced into a position of having to protect our turf.

So we have these fantastic turf wars going on between local jurisdictions protecting what we have

right now, not wanting to lose what we have got, and meanwhile we have signed away our national autonomy to the federal free trade deal. It just does not make a lot of sense, although on the other hand, perhaps it does.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the industry compensation plans that I had referred to earlier, and I believe the minister made reference to in her speech, although I could be wrong, but I think she may have made some reference to the compensation funds as examples of how harmonization was working. We have suggested on this side that the minister look at compensation funds for other industries, too.

We have a patchwork quilt once again in the travel industry in Canada with a compensation fund in Ontario, Quebec and B.C. and nothing in the other provinces. So if a person fails to buy insurance on a trip that they take and the company goes bankrupt, as they seem to be doing quite regularly now—almost every week or two there is some company out of Toronto going under. When a tour company in Toronto goes out of business and leaves people stranded, what in effect happens is if it is an Ontario resident who has bought the tour, they are covered. They make a claim through the compensation fund—once again, a compensation fund, by the way, that is funded by the industry. It is not funded by the government; it is funded by a levy on the industry.

So if you happen to live in Kenora and you bought your tour and the company goes bankrupt and leaves you stranded in the Bahamas or wherever—and, by the way, that is probably a good place to be stranded if you are going to be stranded anywhere—you will make your claim, if you get home that is, and you will make your claim to the compensation fund and you collect it.

But if you happen to live in Manitoba, if you happen to live in Winnipeg, if you happen to live in Reston, Manitoba—and a fine place it is—if you happen to live there and you happen to buy a tour from the same company and you get stranded down in Barbados, that is the end of you. We will never hear from you again. You are never going to get back because there is no compensation fund. You are on your own hook, Madam Deputy Speaker. So I would argue that there is some need for some sort of harmonization, some sort of standardization across the country as much as that is possible.

I do applaud the previous ministers for having been successful in getting all the provinces together with the federal government to have the compensation plans we have right now in the insurance industry. Because, as I said, while there was no bankruptcies in the life insurance business for the last 100 years, just a few months ago one did go bankrupt.

People are very happy today that those compensation funds were set up by the previous NDP government here, and other governments across the country, in co-operation with those other governments. In fact, today people are very happy that the compensation fund was set up in the property and casualty field, because there have been recent bankruptcies in the property and casualty field, and people are benefiting because they now know that they will be covered by those areas.

So that is an area where a problem was not only dealt with, but a problem was anticipated. Too often governments do not anticipate problems. They wait till the cows are out of the barn before they act. But in the case of the life companies, what happened was that the government decided to bring in a parallel compensation fund with the property and casualty companies. It took five or six years, but it did happen that a life company went out of business.

That is why we not only have to anticipate problems, we cannot wait until there is a major mess in our back yard before we clean it up, we have to look ahead. We have to say that it is probable. The likelihood and the probability is that if such and such happened in a neighbouring jurisdiction, it is only reasonable that that particular problem may in fact happen in our jurisdiction at some point, and for us to ignore that is to ignore the obvious. So that when we find ourselves in a mess, we say—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order please. The honourable member for Elmwood's time has expired.

Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 8 (The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances). Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

BILL 16—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 16 (The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Mrs. Wowchuk) and standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson? [agreed]

The honourable member for Swan River—seven minutes remaining.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I realize I only have a few minutes to put some comments on the record, but I want to reiterate what my concerns are with this bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the decisions made by this government with regard to the powers of school trustees are very serious. It seriously undermines the work of school trustees, of superintendents, schools and teachers across the province. By undermining these responsibilities there is only one group of people that is going to suffer and that is the children. It is a shame that this government lacks the foresight and commitment to education and to our young people that they get the proper education, that they would make such a decision that would attack the local decision-making powers of elected officials, and, indeed, put the public education system in jeopardy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government has chosen to make unprecedented cuts in provincial support and to the public education, and, as a result, has just changed the quality of education. School boards do not have the ability to raise the extra money that they might need to bring in additional courses. They are restricted in their fundraising, and that will have a negative effect on our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government is entrenching the inequities from one division to another. Government has to take into consideration that every division does not have the same tax base, but all children should have the opportunity to get a fair education, a high quality of education. School boards should not be restricted in their ability to raise taxes if that is what they so

choose. If they believe in their children and the ratepayers are willing to pay the extra taxes, then that ability should be left there for school boards. After all, school boards are elected bodies, and if they make the wrong decisions, the ratepayers will let them know when the next election comes around, just as ratepayers will let provincial governments know that they have made the wrong decision.

What is being undermined here is the ability for school boards to provide adequate education. It is a concern that this government does not recognize the inequities across the province, and they instead choose to further entrench those inequities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, other decisions and cuts by this government to education that are going to affect our children are the changes they have made to clinicians, cuts to clinicians. Although they say that they have put money in place to cover these clinicians, in actual fact when you talk to divisions there are extra costs divisions are being asked to pick up. All the money did not transfer with the clinicians that the government had in place prior to this and, again, the reducing of these services, particularly in the rural areas, is going to cause serious problems.

I guess the other area of concern is the shift in priority from public schools to private schools under this government. Really, when you look at the changes that are being made, we are moving toward a two-tier education system. The government has chosen to shift more funding toward private schools, private schools that have the ability to collect money, to charge fees to those people who choose to go to school there. Government is putting more money into those schools.

Now, by putting more money into those schools, there is less money going to the public school system, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I feel this is very unfair. The public school system is there to provide an education for all people. The public school cannot say that because certain people have disabilities or are not at a certain level that they will not accept them in their schools. The public school has to accept everybody, a very broad range.

* (1130)

The private schools do not have to do that. As a result, those with money, the wealthy, who can afford to pay to have children attend a private school, will have more opportunities, and this is unfair. We have to, as a province, be sure that all

children have the opportunity to get an education. By setting up this two-tier education system, the poor will continue to fall further and further behind, and we will not begin to close the gap. Instead, we will see the gap broadening even further.

So I am disappointed that the government has taken the steps that they have under this bill, and I am disappointed that they are not taking into consideration the merits of the public school system. I feel very strongly that they should be supporting that system much stronger than they are instead of shifting their preference over to the private school system where fewer children can access it.

In reality, Madam Deputy Speaker, much of this legislation, I believe, will hit harder on rural schools, where there is a much lower tax base and more difficulty in raising the funds. By restricting the percentage of taxes that can be raised, we will see disparities. I certainly would hope that the government would see the errors of their ways and very soon make attempts to correct this and not infringe in the powers of the school boards or the superintendents and the teachers to make decisions on behalf of their children.

Ms. Marianne Cerlilli (Radisson): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to stand and speak to this bill dealing with our public education system and this government's insistence on cutting back and privatizing that system.

I have a number of concerns with respect to the treatment of students and youth by this government generally, and nowhere is it more clear in the way that they do not seem to understand the importance of a public education system.

In our democracy, education traditionally has been considered to be a right, that education is the great equalizer, that we have public education so that no matter your family background, no matter the situation that you were born into, that you can have access to good quality education and that you will then be able to improve your status and become independent and be able to participate fully in our community and society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is not able to happen when we have governments such as the current one which does not seem to value a public and equally accessible education system. The government tries to say that the cuts to education are not going to affect the quality of education and life in the classroom, but that is completely ridiculous

and untrue because there is no way that you can have the kinds of cuts which are affecting staffing, which are affecting programs, and not affect the life of the student and their education.

It is unprecedented that this government would have the kind of cutbacks that this government is having, is putting forward, and a number of students and other concerned people have been calling our office. It is interesting to note where some of the cutbacks are affecting schools in the community that I represent.

I have had concerns expressed about the busing that is going to be affected. Now, in River East School Division, they are forced to eliminate busing service for Grades 11 and 12 students. We are going to have people in a situation, in an area of the community that I represent, which is not close to public transit, where students are now going to have to find their own way to school because those students are not going to have either a school bus or accessibility to public transit. They are going to have to walk a long distance or rely on their parents or other ways of getting to school.

I guess the logical conclusion is this is going to continue, so we are going to have younger and younger and younger students facing this kind of situation. A number of students have called with concern that they are going to lose their music programs, that they are going to lose some of the vocational and industrial arts programs, that they are going to continue to have language programs cut back, that counsellors are going to be eliminated.

An Honourable Member: And are they?

Ms. Cerlilli: These are all the services, yes, that are being eliminated in our public school system as we speak because of the box that this government is putting school boards in. They have shown that they have no respect for the democratically elected school trustees, and I think that the way they have capped the revenue-generating capability of elected school boards shows that clearly.

They have done this because they knew that people were no longer buying the line that they had not increased taxes, so not only are they cutting back on the school financing that they are responsible for, but they are limiting the ability for school boards to raise revenue in their own area, in their own jurisdiction, just so it will not reflect back badly onto their government. That has got to be the

most crass politics that you can play with people's lives and people's education.

The other thing that we have talked extensively about here is the inequity with which these cutbacks are going to affect the different school divisions. Having just come from talking to students in Transcona School Division and teachers there, I know that it seems that there is no concern for parts of the city that have housing and real estate that is more modest, that cannot generate the kind of revenue that other parts of the city might, the way that this cutback and change is going to affect those school divisions like Transcona.

Then they will try and say that it is fair. The definition of fair of this government is something that is incomprehensible, is illogical. You can easily understand that it is not fair to make across-the-board, regressive taxes in the way that they have and in the way that they are dealing with school division property taxes. It does not take a university education to understand basic fairness, but yet this government seems to not understand that.

* (1140)

The other thing that is a big concern is the way that they are attacking public sector workers and teachers with these cutbacks. It is teachers and the students that they work with that are expected to bear the brunt of this government's inability to understand fair taxation and fairness. We have all of the excuses of the deficit that are used for this government to carry out their agenda, their agenda that they would carry out, no matter what was happening.

We know that they have a philosophical or ideological bias with respect to education and with respect to the economy, and that they would be doing these kinds of things no matter what the situation was. But when they do things like the cuts in education, particularly in the area of Student Social Allowances, it just shows how little they understand the realities—or maybe they do understand it and they just do not care—the realities that many people in this province live with.

We have heard over and over again the statistics of child poverty. We have heard over and over again the rise in violence, the increase in demands being placed on teachers, and yet this government chooses to turn their backs on young people in this province and to attack the public system in the way that they are.

There has to be some explanation to this government about the connection between the economy, education and the dire social consequences—the consequences of their approach. When there is an increase in poverty and a downturn in the economy, invariably it is young people that are going to suffer.

All those people that are unemployed, all those people forced onto social allowance that have never been in that situation before, many of them have young children in the school system. It is amazing to me that this government cannot understand that in a time of economic crisis which they have created, economic problems and hard times, you should be investing more.

Yet this government has contributed with their policies of increasing the disparity and unfairness in taxation. They have created hard times that require more emphasis on education, and this is why I cannot understand that they would rather have people simply unemployed and collecting welfare than to have them on Student Social Allowance.

I would just like the members opposite to consider that in their lifetime, over the last number of years, 40, 50 years, the shift in taxation from having about 50 percent of the revenue generated go to pay for government services that used to come from industry and business, 50 percent, and 50 percent approximately came from individual workers and taxpayers, and how that 50 percent from individuals still, was calibrated on a scale of ability to pay and how now under Conservative and Liberal governments we have seen that shift to where the individual is paying for 80 percent or more of revenue to government. That is the kind of policy that is creating our society to be a much more violent and uncaring society. Also, it reinforces the line that this government uses about personal income taxes.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

They fail to talk about the side of the equation where that money used to come from, how much of revenue used to come from industry. Oh, we could say, that is just the way it is, and we do not have money to fund education. The argument that industry will just leave if we have them pay their fair share of costs for things like education, educated people that they are going to benefit from in their workplaces, well, they will say that those industries will leave, and then they will bring in policies like the trade agreements which make that even easier.

We see how the Conservative governments through a variety of policies, economic policies, education policies, create a society that is unequal, create a society where there is poverty and create a society—we are waiting. We have been waiting how many years in this country for the great trickle down, but all that is happening under Conservative governments with these policies is, we have more poor people, they are less educated, they are, in some sense under this government, now even less able to speak on their own behalf.

The disparity between the wealthy and the poor is even greater. By entrenching that in the education system they are making matters even worse.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker. I was just talking to some students the other day. I asked them how many of those students worked. There were a number of students. I would say more than half of the 100 or so students I was talking to were working more than 10 hours a week part time while they were in school full time.

Now, by this time of year the students that are in school tend to be the ones that are going to finish. They tend to be the students that are doing all right. They are not the students that need a lot of support and assistance, and what we are creating is a system where the gap between the students that are going to make it and the ones that are not is widening even further, and this is entrenched with all of these students. Some of them are go-getters. They were high-achieving, capable young people, and they were going to school full time and working, some of them 20, 25, even more hours per week. All of those students are also then generating an income.

I told them about the increase in tuition fees and told them how much it is going to cost for them to go to university and college, and if they planned to do that, they had better start saving their money, because what is happening is, the students that are not in school anymore are also the students that are not employed, more often than not. So this is the disparity that I am talking about that is occurring. The students that have it are having it all.

It is interesting to look at the amount of disposable income that those students have. Some of them might not understand that there are problems in the economy right now, because they are in school, they live at home, and they have a part-time job. Some

of them were making beyond minimum wage. I think they are in for a big surprise once they are finished school and if they choose to live out on their own, because they will find that that minimum wage does not go very far when they have to start paying for their food and rent. The students that are finding that out already are the young people that are not in school, as I said, more often, I think, are the ones that do not have a job.

Those are the ones that need a broader range of programs available through the schools. We often hear people say that students are not all the same. We have to be providing a broad range of education, opportunities of different teaching methods and different programs. Some of the students that I was talking with the other day felt, well, it was up to everyone individually. They thought, you know, if you wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer, whatever you wanted to do with your life, that you could do that. In some cases, that is true. In some ways, that is true, but when you start to look at the cutbacks that are occurring in other areas and the fact that there are not the jobs there, I think that some students in this group I was talking with are in for a surprise when they realize there are only a limited number of job opportunities available.

* (1150)

I think that the members opposite should realize that the kind of world that young people are graduating into requires them to have a lot of optimism, requires them to keep up their creativity and hope and all those kind of things. It also requires that they understand what reality is and understand what the reality is for their peers and understand that reality is more than just dollars and cents, and that government and education, through our education system, has a responsibility to teach young people about more than what it is just to get a job, what they need to get a job, that in our society now, education has, and I think it always has had, there has been a need for young people to learn more about their own health, how to have healthy relationships, how to be a full participating citizen in our society. They need to understand things about the economy, about world affairs. It should not be a narrow education geared just to a specific job.

We want people to be educated to be citizens. The basic skills that we are trying to teach in our education system are expanding. We must realize that we cannot continue to approach our education system with an attitude that is no longer relevant.

There are problems facing us that were never contemplated within the last even 50 years ago that young people are now forced to face. We have a responsibility and an obligation to have them be prepared, through our public education system, to face those and for all of them to be able to deal with those things.

I will talk briefly about programs such as peer support programs and conflict mediation programs, which teach the kinds of skills that are transferable to many areas. I feel strongly that we have a responsibility to have programs that are going to deal with those areas as well.

It is unfortunate, and it shows the bias in the entrenched education program, when those are the kinds of programs that are often cut first. Those are the kinds of programs that often are going to give young people the skills that they need to be able to stay in school and to be able to make their way in the world.

One of the other things that I want to talk about is the need in our youth services and education programming to have a more comprehensive and student-oriented approach. I often hear people who have been through the system talk about how it seems like the system is there just to perpetuate itself and it is no longer there to actually meet the needs of the young people in the system. When we look at the 30 percent dropout rate, we look at the number of young people that are not making it, that are living on the streets, it shows that this is true.

You know, you have to wonder why we have an economy in the first place and why we have governments if it is not to provide the services for those people who need that support. This government does not seem to understand. They will say that I am just negative or that I am not in touch with reality or whatever else that they will say over there, but they seem to deny, Mr. Speaker, that there are a huge number of young people who, of no fault of their own, are in a situation where they are forced out of school or forced out of their homes. These are the young people that we have the responsibility to pay attention to and to ensure there are services for, because the small percentage that are in school and go on to university, those are that are going to make it. They do not need us to interfere.

It seems like everyone wants to work with those young people, and it is the ones who are more

challenging, the individuals who often get in trouble with the law or are not as academically successful, that people do not want to have to deal with. Those are the individuals who are ultimately going to cost us the most. Those are the ones that are going to be on welfare. Those are going to be the young people that will have more health problems, and those are the ones that often have more trouble with the law. At least that is the way our legal system works now.

I think, though, I would be remiss if I did not talk about the fact that in conversations with youth workers, there are a lot of young people who come from what we would consider more affluent backgrounds who are also in trouble with the law. A lot of the increase in violence and gangs are not from young people who are of a lower socioeconomic status, but these are young people who have working parents, professional parents. Some of the youth workers feel that these young people are also in crisis because they have been neglected and they have not had the opportunity to have a lot of positive contacts with human relationships either in their family.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

A lot of those young people are also victims of child abuse and neglect, and it is important to realize that the increase in youth gangs and violence is related to the kind of violence that young people see modelled before them, either through the media or at home and in their community.

One of the reasons that I was so concerned about the increase in organized racism was these are the kinds of young people that are easy victims for those kinds of organizations. It is young people that have a high need for some sense of personal power that have been victimized, that feel that they do not belong, that become the easy victims for these kinds of organizations, organizations that are often led also by older youth.

It is important for us to realize these connections, and it is important for us to realize that we have to intervene in a way that is going to provide skills so that the young people themselves are going to be stronger to resist the kind of peer pressure and influence that is in the schools and is part of their life. I think that it takes a very strong young person to be able to find their own way in a positive direction amongst all the negative influence that is out there.

I would be remiss, I think too, if I did not mention in this vein the need for increased training of teachers and staff in education and youth services to understand the influences on youth and to be better able to be interested in the student rather than treating the student as a person there that they are just supposed to deliver the information to, that it takes a certain kind of training to train teachers who are going to be able to deal with the vast number of problems that students bring to the school.

* (1200)

I am concerned that our education and training of teachers is not keeping pace with the changing demands on teachers and staff in the schools and working in new services. This is something that takes some serious consideration, that we have to start dealing with the reality of students' lives, the number of them that are dealing with a variety of pressures.

I was interested in, when I was talking with another group of students, the number of those students that were from families where someone in their home was unemployed and how that was affecting their life while they were in high school.

You will find, too, the number of students that have someone in their family who is critically ill and how that affects their ability to perform in school and affects their life. Often we hear of students who are working, and there will be those students who are pocketing that money for themselves. They are able to go out and have a very considerable amount of disposable income so that they can buy stereos and records and clothes and all that kind of stuff.

There is also a large number of young people in schools who work oftentimes 30 hours a week, and that money is going to supplement the income of the family. That is something that I think is redeveloping. It was probably something that was common back in prior generations, and it is something that is being necessitated again.

We like to think that when young people are in school, their education is going to be their first priority and that they are going to be able to dedicate themselves to their studies and to getting the most out of their time and their years in school. I think it is a real concern, when we look at the number of young people that are working, as I said, more than 20 hours a week often, and then are expected to go and have the energy and the wherewithal to dedicate to their education.

I think that part of this is tied up in the kind of society values that we have, where we have a society that continually encourages people through media and advertising and the way that news is portrayed where they are supposed to aspire to a job that will afford them the money so that they will be able to buy all these things which are supposed to make them happier and supposed to give them a certain satisfaction.

I think there are a number of people that are realizing a couple of things, that not only is this false, but it has also created an economy that is damaging in a number of ways.

It is damaging because it creates a class system, and it creates a large gap between the haves and have-nots. Also, these young people are realizing how damaging this consumerism and materialistic societal values are on our environment and how we cannot continue on for very many more generations.

So the more that we continue to have advertising which bombards young people on the one hand to go out and have a job so that they can buy all these things, and then on the other hand, we are telling these same young people that they should be committed and focused on their education so that they can get a better job, a lot of young people are looking at this and they are saying, well—they just do not buy it.

The members opposite can make light of this. They can try and take attention away from this. When we ask questions in the House about the number of students who are not completing their education, we do not get answers from the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey). When we ask questions about the number of young people who are falling through the cracks of our social welfare system, the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) does not have those kinds of statistics.

Over and over again, it is evident that this government chooses to look at the reality faced by only those people who are the more affluent and the privileged. They fail to recognize that often this is not from the hard work of those individuals. It is simply because they have the good fortune to be born a certain person in a certain family. Often, they have been able to be born a certain race or a certain gender with the privilege that automatically goes along with that.

They will continue, it seems, to resist looking at the reality that is faced by an ever-increasing proportion of young people who do not share those privileges. When you look at the percentage of aboriginal youth, the percentage who are unemployed, who are out of school, and how that percentage is growing and how those demographics are shaping our society, you realize the problems that we are headed for.

We cannot continue to have a society with the opportunity and the wealth enjoyed by a smaller and smaller group of people and have more and more people who are underprivileged, undereducated and barred from participating in our society and our economy because of those things.

There are a couple of things that government can do to deal with this. Governments can ensure that everyone has an opportunity for the kind of education that is going to help them better themselves and is going to help them deal with their problems. They can also ensure that we have a health care system that is going to ensure that people know how to take care of themselves and be healthy and focus on their ability to do that.

But this government chooses to cut back in both those areas, and you can only come to one conclusion, because I think the government does understand this and that they are choosing to ignore it and that they are choosing to not only disregard poverty and the effects, but they are choosing to keep those people as uneducated as possible, and even to silence them.

The members opposite were talking earlier about literacy. I mean, that is a very important point. The government has made a big fuss about their commitment to literacy but that has not translated into dollars. I share an office with an organization focusing on developing literacy. They are in the same office as my constituency office, and it is amazing to see the program that that organization delivers in literacy on a shoestring, less than \$30,000 a year. That grant is being cut back, and it is certainly not being expanded even though that organization is successful and is managing to involve more and more people as volunteers and more and more people as participants who want to learn to read.

* (1210)

Mr. Acting Speaker, could I ask you how much time I have left?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Three minutes.

Ms. Cerlili: Three minutes. There are a number of other issues related to education. Maybe I will just end off with focusing on human rights a little bit and how important it is for our education system to teach people about their human rights, because I think that we should understand that people only have human rights if they know what they are.

So if we do not have schools that are going to educate young people about what their rights are as employees, what their rights are as citizens, then we might as well not have all the Charter of Rights and all the legislation that we have because people will either not know what they are or people will not know what they can do to ensure that their rights are enforced and not violated.

Again, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would just say that that is the kind of education that is not just focused on this idea that the only reason you go to school is to get a job. School is there to prepare you for life generally, and to have people develop their natural capabilities for learning and their natural talents, and figuring out what those natural talents and interests are.

In the cutbacks that this government are enforcing on education through this legislation, that is not going to be likely happen because schools will continually be in a state of crisis and emergency and forced to just deal with the very bare minimum. That is a shame in a society as affluent and as wealthy as ours, that that opportunity is not more equitably distributed.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

This legislation does not go anywhere in having our education system keep up the pace of the changes in the world, the changes in technology. It is going to make it more difficult for schools and educators to do that, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few comments on record on Bill 16, The Public Schools Amendment Act, because I do not think this government has really thought out the negative impact it is going to have on our children who have the opportunity to try and get a better education, to hopefully get better employment opportunities, and the real negative impact it is going to have on the constituents of Point Douglas who live in School

Division No. 1 and the negative impact it is going to have on northern Manitoba. When we talk about increased funding to private schools of \$16 million and the cut of \$16 million to our public school system, that means that programs will have to be cut somewhere along the line.

When you have a two-tiered education system, and if you end up having a much better education system in the private schools that only certain individuals have the money to access and if you look at the location of private schools, I do not see too many in northern Manitoba. So what is going to happen to those children? Are they going to be forced to take education courses that are less—I think that is wrong.

If you look at the cuts to our public school system, and when you look at the negative impact it is going to have on School Division No. 1—if you look at the make-up of the population of School No. 1, you have a lot of single parents, you have people with low education themselves, you have people who are highly unemployed, you have a lot of students who have to access special education programs.

When you look at the new results of Canada about our poverty rate, we in Manitoba today have the highest poverty rate in Canada—the highest. We talk about the budget coming and the positive benefits that this budget will bring to Manitobans. All you need to look at is Table No. 6, Poverty by Provinces. This was in 1991.

Child poverty—we have always been the highest in Canada. Now it is all persons—218,000 which is 21.1 percent, the highest in all of Canada. I hear the government speak and say our budget is the best. Our hands-off policy will work. We will stimulate the economy. We will have jobs for everybody. Well, I do not see too many jobs when your poverty rate goes up to 21.1 percent.

It is not working. I hope this government will be wise enough to look at their hands-off policy and try and do something to stimulate the economy to get people working. The more people you have working, the more people you have paying taxes, the more dollars you have to spend on our education for our children.

Our children need a good education. It has been proven over and over. The lower education, the lower opportunities for jobs, the lower income. The higher education, the better prospects for jobs, the

higher income. It is just plain sense. People will tell you over and over.

When we see the lineups at the food banks and soup kitchens increasing, and it says here, soup kitchens are stark testimony to the fact that the government's management of the economy is not working. That is from the Winnipeg Harvest report of April 5, 1993.

The other thing is, the number of people served monthly at the Winnipeg Harvest has increased by more than 90 percent in the last year—90 percent. The number of rural food banks have increased from six to 24 indicating growing need across the province. [interjection] Some are in Steinbach, yes. Beausejour is another one. Those are thriving farming communities. What is happening, Mr. Speaker?

There is something drastic happening to the citizens of Manitoba. Also, when this government was elected in 1988, the number of social assistance cases in Winnipeg was 7,271 in March. That number has grown to 16,916, an increase of 133 percent. There is something wrong, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at what happens to our poor children, we know that children that come from poor families have a much higher dropout rate. The dropout rate is 45 percent. We know that children cannot learn when they are sitting at school hungry. Their only thought is to get some food into their empty stomachs and, you know, 40 percent of the people that use the food banks are children—40 percent.

The reason I raise this, Mr. Speaker, is because in School Division No. 1 there are special programs in place for a lot of the children that come from poor families and do not have the opportunity of a decent breakfast or a lunch. They have preschool and prelunch programs. With these cuts, 2 percent right across the board, without even taking into consideration the special needs, the preschool, the lunch programs, the children in School Division No. 1 need to try and keep their attention span to get a good education.

That was not even taken into consideration. It was 2 percent. I am sure that the impact of a 2 percent cut in the constituency of Point Douglas is felt much, much harsher than in the constituency of Tuxedo. I am sure of that.

When you have an empty stomach you cannot learn, because you do not have the attention span.

So how this government came to say that cuts are fair right across the board, it has not been well thought out.

When you look at the impacts that some of the cuts we see in Family Services—for instance, we see the cut to daycare programs for students that have finally got their education, graduated, and now they are going to go out and look for a job. How many people can find a job in two weeks? It is difficult. There are a lot of people unemployed. The competition is very tough.

Well, it would take at least eight weeks, and that is what this government chose to cut, the assistance program for these graduates from colleges, universities, high school to try and look for a job to become taxpaying citizens of Manitoba. That opportunity has been cut from eight weeks to two weeks.

* (1220)

An Honourable Member: Driving people to welfare.

Mr. Hlckes: That is exactly what it is doing. It is driving people to welfare. Because if you cannot place your children in child care facilities, if you have to sit at home to look after your children, how can you go out there to look for a job? It is impossible. It does not work.

An Honourable Member: Do they care?

Mr. Hlckes: Well, I do not know. I hope some of them care.

But the thing I talked about is in northern Manitoba, when you look at northern Manitoba, that 2 percent cut right across the board, they did not really look at it. If you were to use that \$16-million increase in a public school system versus the private school system, which have already been operating for years, I bet you some of those private schools did not even ask the government for assistance, because they have been operating for years. The people that can afford it are choosing to send their children there. That is a choice.

Most of the people that send their children to the public school system do not have that choice. They just do not, because they do not have the \$7,000 per year to pay those fees.

An Honourable Member: Do they selectively accept students?

Mr. Hlckes: I do not know if they selectively—well, I guess they would because, if you have the money,

then you can go. If you do not have the money, you cannot go. It is as simple as that.

If you have students that are attending the public school system, you can go into any school, any of the schools in Point Douglas and even in a lot of the communities in northern Manitoba, and you will see the aboriginal people, the nonaboriginal people mixing together, playing together, learning, respecting one another. If you go into the constituency of Point Douglas, you see Filipino, Chinese, Ukrainians, Polish, Russians. They all go to the same public school system. [interjection] There are quite a few. Well, there are a few whale hunters up in Churchill.

So when you have a public school system that is accessed by every walk of life, then you have a better understanding of one another's values and cultures. Out of that, what happens is, you end up with respect for other people's values and cultures—not only respect, but a fair understanding. What happens is, in a lot of your private schools, they do not have that. A lot of your schools, you have to be Catholic or you have to be a certain religion, and that takes away from the multicultural aspect of our public school system.

When you look at the School Division No. 1, that is where the make-up of all Point Douglas is. It is in School Division No. 1. When you look at the make-up of those children in there, you will see that they have the highest percentage of special needs students, the highest percentage in all of Manitoba. Forty-three percent of all the special needs students are going to school in School Division No. 1.

So what does that tell you? That tells you that you need special school assistance, special aides in the classrooms to deal with the special needs children to help them to get the best education that is possible for them. That is 43 percent of all the students in Manitoba.

When you need those teachers' aides in those classrooms, and when you start looking at—when you tell a school division, you have to cut two percent, where are they going to find that two percent? They do not have what some school divisions have, a contingency fund or a rainy day fund or what have you. They are operating, a lot of them, just on budget levels.

So what is going to happen to those students, those special needs students? Are they going to be left aside, which some of them have been for years

and years and years? No, that cannot happen. How are they going to do that? They are going to have to cut either the teachers' aides, or they are going to have to cut preschool or lunch programs. What other choices do they have? They cannot cut back on schools, on schoolbooks.

So when I saw this 2 percent cutback straight across the board and realized it was right across, I knew then that it was not a very well-thought-out plan and that this government had not consulted with the people of Manitoba. It was so obvious, because if the people in School Division No. 1 would have told you a different story than people that are going to school in River Heights or Ravenscourt or St. John's or what have you. They would have told you a different story.

I heard, and I do not know how true this is, that one of the private schools had so much funds that they gave away one of their Zambonis because they had enough money that they were going to buy another one. There was nothing wrong with that Zamboni. They just had too much money. They did not know what to do with it, so they donated that Zamboni somewhere else. I think it was St. John's-Ravenscourt. That is what I heard.

I know in northern Manitoba, there are communities, not just a school, would love to have a Zamboni. Some of them, you know, they have no artificial ice.

An Honourable Member: Stop picking on farmers.

Mr. Hickes: Well, how am I picking on farmers? I never said anything about farms. I would never pick on farmers. If it were not for the farmers, the food banks would not have any food to give to our hungry children, who are going to school, because of these hilarious cutbacks of this government. A 2 percent cutback across the board. The food bank, Winnipeg Harvest, gets a lot of bread and doughnuts and stuff that come from farmers. That is where they come from, the farmers.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the 2 percent cutbacks right across the board, I hope this government will reconsider the reasons why it happened and give it some more thought and look at the government's own role in politics.

How would the government feel if big brother Mr. Mulroney in Ottawa, the federal government, said to the province, you will do this and that is it? No, maybe you were elected, but you were not elected to represent the people. We will tell you what to do and you do as you are told. How would you feel? I bet you every member would be up in arms. They would say, we were elected by the people; we represent the people.

How do you think the school trustees feel when they were told that you have to cap at 2 percent? Told. It was the people of Manitoba who voted those school trustees in to make up their own minds. Just like we are elected here, the government is elected here to do what they think is best for Manitobans. We do not always agree, but the school trustees were elected by the citizens of Manitoba to do what they feel is right, not to be told by the next level of government, you do this no matter what.

I would like to see the same thing happen to this government by the federal government. I would just love to see that. Because I know what their reaction would be. The Finance minister (Mr. Manness) would be the first one to stand in his chair and he would direct the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to phone Ottawa and say, do your job, you do not worry about us, we are doing a good job in Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) will have 23 minutes remaining and, as previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 30, 1993

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